

VZCZCXRO0517

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA  
RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHNP RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHRS RUEHSL RUEHSR RUEHVK  
RUEHYG  
DE RUEHBW #0587 1771529  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P R 261531Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0020  
INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS BELGRADE 000587

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS  
DEPT FOR EUR/SCE (P. PETERSON)

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KS](#) [SR](#)  
SUBJECT: SERBIA SEES VISA LIBERALIZATION AS TOP GOAL

REF: BELGRADE 306

#### Summary

1. (SBU) Enabling Serbian citizens to travel to the European Union without visas is the government's most pressing task, according to Deputy Prime Minister/Interior Minister Ivica Dacic. He believes that the European Union will soon accept Serbia's proposed solution to the last unresolved item on the visa liberalization "road map," the issuance of Serbian passports to Kosovo residents. Dacic's carefully crafted proposal will certainly receive close scrutiny by both the EU's border security experts and the Serbian public. End Summary.

#### EU Visas Top Task

2. (SBU) Minister of Interior Ivica Dacic told the Charge on June 24 that obtaining Schengen "White List" status, i.e. EU visa liberalization (reftel), was the most important task facing the Serbian government. He explained that the economic crisis has made the visa issue even more pressing, as the Serbian public becomes impatient for results from the government.

#### Kosovo Remains Sticking Point

3. (SBU) Dacic said that he expects the European Union to react positively on July 14 to Serbia's most recent proposal for resolving the remaining items on the so-called "road map" for visa liberalization. Dacic confirmed that the issuance of Serbian passports to residents of Kosovo remains the primary sticking point. In its most recent submission, he said, the Serbian government proposed centralizing the issuance of such passports in Belgrade and requiring an additional "security check" to be performed by the police. Because Serbian police had not been present in Kosovo for 10 years, Dacic explained, in practice the requirement would make it impossible for any resident of Kosovo to obtain a Serbian passport. (Comment: Northern Kosovo, where Serbian government officials retain free access, may be a gray zone. End Comment.) The government had dropped the idea of identifying such passports with a special code out of concern that the EU would perceive the practice as discriminatory, Dacic said.

4. (SBU) Dacic added that Serbia would also tighten up residence registration procedures to ensure that Kosovo residents "don't just go register in Presevo" (an ethnic Albanian area of Serbia). He claimed that EU officials had expressed concern only about the issuance of Serbian passports to ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, musing that a "separate agreement" with the EU regarding Kosovo Serbs might eventually be possible.

Comment

-----

15. (SBU) Although our contacts in the Presidency and the European Integration Office profess to share Dacic's optimism that the European Union will be satisfied with the proposal on passport issuance, we remain skeptical that the EU could accept a "solution" based on a tacit understanding that the issuance of Serbian passports to residents of Kosovo would remain possible in theory but impossible in practice. We are also skeptical that the Serbian government would actually cease issuing passports to Kosovo Serbs, a step that would force them either to change their residence registration to Serbia or obtain Kosovo passports - both politically unacceptable to the Serbian government. Resolving this impasse would be Dacic's biggest political victory to date, should he succeed. End Comment.  
BRUSH